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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 004294

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/11/2015

TAGS: [IS](#) [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SETTLEMENTS](#)

SUBJECT: HOUSING MINISTRY DETAILS MEASURES TO HALT
CONSTRUCTION IN WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS AND OUTPOSTS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Gene A. Cretz for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Dr. Chaim Fialkoff, Senior Deputy Director General for Planning and Coordination at the Ministry of Construction and Housing (MOCH) provided details on MOCH,s reported halt in settler construction in the West Bank. According to Fialkoff, the MOCH halted 51 settler construction projects--primarily infrastructure and public facilities--that lacked basic approvals in the West Bank. Fialkoff also stated that the MOCH was working on recalling 430 caravans allocated to settlements under Effie Eitam,s tenure as Housing Minister. Fialkoff denied Palestinian press reports from 20 June saying that the MOCH had made an announcement inviting bids for the construction of 700 new housing units in the settlements of Ma'ale Adummim and Betar Illit. End Summary.

Attempting to Curb Illegal Construction

2. (C) On July 4, Dr. Chaim Fialkoff, Senior Deputy Director General for Planning and Coordination at the Ministry of Construction and Housing (MOCH) provided Econoff clarification on June 27 Israeli press reports saying that the MOCH had halted construction in 50 outposts throughout the West Bank. According to Fialkoff, the MOCH actually halted 51 settler construction projects in the West Bank that had lacked the "most basic planning approvals." These construction projects primarily consisted of infrastructure work--water, roadwork, and sewage--and public facilities, mostly nurseries. The projects were halted at approximately 35 sites throughout "Samaria," or the northern West Bank. When asked by Econoff if the projects curtailed were in settlements or outposts, Fialkoff did not specify, only noting that the projects lacked proper approvals.

3. (C) Fialkoff also stated that in the last year, the MOCH has located 430 caravans in settler sites throughout the West Bank, which it is now trying to recall. These caravans were allocated to settlements during Effie Eitam's tenure as Housing Minister (March 2003-June 2004), but were stopped in October 2004 by then acting Housing Minister Tzipi Livni. Fialkoff said that while the MOCH is trying to reclaim these caravans, the majority of them are occupied.

4. (C) Fialkoff said that these actions were taken in response to a report issued by the State Comptroller on illegal settlement construction, prior to the publication of Talia Sasson,s outpost report in March 2005. According to Fialkoff, upon the release of the State Comptroller,s report, Attorney General Menachem Mazuz froze all allocations for new construction. (Note: The report Fialkoff was probably referring to was the annual State Comptroller report released in May 2004 indicating that the MOCH had funneled approximately \$6.5 million USD to illegal settlement construction between January 2000 and June 2003. The report stated that of this amount, approximately \$4 million went to funding construction projects in outposts. End Note.)

Ma'ale Adummim and Betar Illit: No Tenders Issued...Yet

5. (C) Fialkoff denied Palestinian press reports from June 20 saying that the MOCH has made an announcement inviting bids for the construction of 700 new housing units in the settlements of Ma'ale Adummim and Betar Illit. Fialkoff stated that he would continue to look further into this matter, saying that "there may have been a miscommunication." (Note: Housing Minister Isaac Herzog told staffdel Talwar July 6 that the GOI intends to eventually build 700 new housing units in Ma'ale Adummim and Betar Illit, but that this construction had not yet been formally approved by his Ministry (septel). End note.)

6. (C) In response to Econoff's question on how many tenders outside the Green Line have been approved but not yet constructed, Fialkoff said that generally, the MOCH does not keep a backlog of approved tenders and publishes them "within months of approval," because they are "based on need."

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